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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRATISLAVA 000182

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: DPM CAPLOVIC ON ROMA TORTURE CASE: GOING THROUGH
THE MOTIONS?

REF: BRATISLAVA 163

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Keith A. Eddins, for reasons 1.
4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In an April 17 meeting with Dusan Caplovic, the Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights, Minorities, and Knowledge-Based Society, Charge raised our concerns about the recent police abuse scandal involving the torture of six minor Roma boys in Kosice, eastern Slovakia (reftel). Charge urged the Slovak Government to use this case as an opportunity to denounce discrimination and redouble efforts to train police and other authorities on tolerance and human rights. Caplovic said that the case made him personally very angry, and said he was pleased that the police chief had reacted quickly to the allegations of human rights abuses. He also suggested that intolerance was being imported from Hungary. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Deputy Prime Minister Dusan Caplovic is the Slovak's Government's primary point of contact on human rights and minorities issues. He supervises the work of the Roma Plenipotentiary's office and also chairs the Government-Minority Council. On April 17, Charge met with him to register our concerns about the Kosice torture case. Caplovic was in the Netherlands on April 8 when the story broke (commemorating International Roma Day with a Kosice-based children's choir and the Dutch government). Caplovic gave Charge a translated version of his press statement, in which he apologized to the Roma community and to the elderly woman who was assaulted. His statement also says the "failure of the policemen could not be considered as a fault of the system of the Slovak police force but was the individual failure of specific members of the police force."

¶3. (C) Charge warned that such an egregious incident can beget further human rights abuses if not dealt with properly by the authorities. Charge urged Caplovic to raise with the President and Prime Minister the importance of addressing the issue in a profound way, and offered to explore U.S. assistance on human rights training for Slovak police officers. Caplovic welcomed the idea of U.S. cooperation, and said that he would discuss options with Minister of Interior Kalinak. He also noted that Police Chief Packa removed six of the police officers from the Kosice force and barred them from any future government service.

¶4. (C) Caplovic also denounced the anti-Roma posters found in the towns of Roznava and Rimavska Sobota in the week following the Kosice torture scandal. The posters say "the Romany problem exists, our turning a blind eye to it will have consequences for the lives of our children" and feature photos of Romas with knives in their hands or in jail. In response, Caplovic said "Anti-Romany, anti-Jewish and anti-Slovak manifestations and moods in neighboring Hungary have considerably contributed to the current anti-Romany

incidents in Roznava and Rimavska Sobota." Caplovic told Charge that since Slovakia is receiving an import of dangerous ideas from Hungary, the government will take strong measures to combat anti-Roma extremism. Caplovic claimed that the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) has close contacts with extremist groups.

15. (C) Charge inquired about the reorganization at the Roma Plenipotentiary's office. Charge said that we had heard earlier from the Roma Plenipotentiary, Anina Botosova, that two new Directors were appointed to manage the office and the distribution of EU funds without her input or consent.

(Note: NGO observers and Botosova herself interpreted this as Caplovic's attempt to strip her of her substantive role and convert her position into that of a mere figurehead. End note.) Caplovic explained that Slovakia is the only country in the EU which has made Roma development projects a "horizontal priority" for EU structural funds, devoting 200 million euros to education, housing, and health for the Roma. Municipalities will administer the funds, and the plenipotentiary's office is busy training mayors on how to apply for the funds. To assist with this process, Caplovic decided to "strengthen" the office with the addition of two technocrats. Caplovic added that Ms. Botosova will be consumed with Slovakia's Presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, which begins in July.

16. (C) COMMENT: Caplovic left us with the impression he was simply going through the motions; he said the right things, but any sense of urgency was lacking. While we agree with Caplovic that Police Chief Packa's immediate response to the torture case was a good first step, we remain disappointed

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that the President and Prime Minister have not engaged on the issue in any meaningful way. Furthermore, the fact that Caplovic has laid the blame on Hungarians for anti-Roma sentiment in Slovakia is a transparent attempt to pass the buck. If Caplovic is not seized with the issue, it is unlikely that this case will promote greater human rights awareness and tolerance in government institutions. We are concerned that the Plenipotentiary Office's restructuring is another blow to the one national-level Roma political representative. We will continue to do what we can to support her, and plan to engage, with others members of the diplomatic community, in Slovakia's Presidency of the Decade for Roma Inclusion. We will also monitor the pending criminal case against the six police officers, as well as efforts to reform police human rights training. End Comment. EDDINS